

Jenny Note #1

Oct 15, 1980

WRITTEN SEPTEMBER, 2017



WIND THE TAPE TO SOMEWHERE AROUND 1986.

I WAS LIVING IN PROVIDENCE RI, WHERE I HAD MOVED TO BE WITH TIGGER WHILE SHE WAS GOING TO COLLEGE AT BROWN BECAUSE I REALIZED ON SOME SEMI-CONSCIOUS LEVEL THAT IF I WAS GOING TO SURVIVE JENNY'S DEATH, I NEEDED TO BE AROUND SOMEONE WHO CARED.

IT HAD BEEN 5 YEARS SINCE WE WERE FRIENDS, 3 YEARS SINCE WE LAST INTERACTED, 3 YEARS SINCE SHE DIED, 2 YEARS SINCE WE FOUND OUT SHE WAS DEAD.

I REMEMBER SUDDENLY REALIZING THAT FROM THIS POINT FORWARD, TIME WOULD BE CARRYING ME FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY FROM HER. AN IMAGE CAME INTO MY MIND OF STANDING ON A PIER WATCHING SOMEONE ON THE DECK OF AN OCEAN LINER THAT IS SLOWLY SAILING AWAY. YOU CAN'T TELL IF THEY'RE WAVING OR EVEN LOOKING BACK AT YOU. YOU LOOK FOR SOME SMALL SIGN THAT YOU MATTER TO THEM, BUT THERE ISN'T ANY.

THEY'RE BEYOND CARING, NOW. THEY'RE GONE, AND THEY'RE NEVER COMING BACK. IT'S OVER.

THAT SINGLE-DIGIT NUMBER OF YEARS ALREADY SEEMED TOO LONG, BUT I KNEW IT WOULD ONLY MULTIPLY. SIMPLY CONTEMPLATING THE ENORMITY OF THE GAP SLOWLY OPENING UP IN FRONT OF ME WAS A DEEPLY DESPAIRING THOUGHT.

MOVING FORWARD...

I HAD ALWAYS BEEN A FAN OF THE MOVIE *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*. I SAW IT WHEN I WAS SOMETHING LIKE TWO YEARS OLD, IN ENGLAND WHEN IT FIRST CAME OUT, IN CINERAMA. (I REMEMBER THINKING THAT THE FROZEN-SLEEP SARCOPHAGI LOOKED LIKE GIANT SPOONS, AND WHERE WERE ALL THE OTHER GIANT UTENSILS?) I READ THE BOOK OVER AND OVER (THIS WAS A LITTLE BEFORE VIDEOS WERE AFFORDABLE). CONSEQUENTLY, I OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT THE YEAR 2000, AND THE FACT THAT **I WOULD BE THIRTY-FIVE** WHEN ALL OF THESE THINGS WERE TAKING PLACE.

I NEVER REALLY THOUGHT MUCH PAST THAT YEAR, BECAUSE IT ALREADY SEEMED ON THE EDGE OF KNOWABILITY. MAYBE SPACE TRAVEL WOULD BE ROUTINE BY THEN, AS IN THE STORY, BUT

MAYBE IT WOULDN'T. MAYBE THERE WOULD BE SMART COMPUTERS WITH WHOM WE COULD HAVE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS, OR MAYBE THERE WOULDN'T. MY PRIMARY LIFE-JOB – WHEN I COULD MANAGE TO BE FUNCTIONAL ENOUGH TO DO IT – WAS TO TRY TO BE INVOLVED WITH MAKING THE SMART-MACHINES-AND-SPACE-TRAVEL THING A REALITY, AND IT DIDN'T SEEM LIKE THERE WAS MUCH POINT IN THINKING BEYOND THE BENCHMARK YEAR OF 2000.

THEN LOTS OF STUFF HAPPENED AND I KIND OF LOST TRACK OF TIME...

FLASH FORWARD TO NOW – SEPTEMBER, 2017.

IT'S BEEN **THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS** SINCE JENNY'S FIRST NOTE TO ME.

I FEEL LIKE SCREAMING INTO THE VOID: **THIRTY-SEVEN YEARS, WHAT THE FUCK???** I NEVER REALLY CONTEMPLATED BEING *THAT OLD*, MUCH LESS BEING *THAT LONG PAST*... WHATEVER JENNY REPRESENTS. "THE MOST MEANINGFUL PART OF MY LIFE"? (SOMETIMES MY BRAIN SAYS "ONLY MEANINGFUL", AND IT TAKES ME AWHILE TO REMEMBER THAT THIS ISN'T TRUE.)

IT DOES FEEL LIKE THAT WAS THE LAST PART OF MY LIFE WHEN EVERYTHING HAD THE POTENTIAL TO BE OKAY. NOW IT'S ALWAYS GOING TO FEEL LIKE LIVING IN A HOUSE WHERE A CANYON SUDDENLY OPENED UP AND SWALLOWED HALF OF IT. YOU CAN'T REBUILD IT BECAUSE THERE'S NOTHING TO BUILD ON; YOU CAN'T EVEN WEATHERPROOF IT. YOU JUST HAVE TO LIVE WITH PART OF THE HOUSE BEING OPEN TO THE OUTSIDE. YOU KEEP THE DOORS TO THAT SECTION CLOSED MOST OF THE TIME, BUT THEY DON'T COMPLETELY SHUT OUT THE HOWLING WIND AND DARKNESS.

BACK TO OCTOBER 15, 1980.

I HAD BEEN LEAVING NOTES IN HER LOCKER FOR SOME WEEKS BEFORE THIS. I RECALL ALMOST NOTHING ABOUT THEM EXCEPT ONE IN PARTICULAR WHERE THERE HAD BEEN A LONGER-THAN-USUAL HIATUS, AND I HAD DATED THE NOTE 1645 AND BLAMED "Y^e MAILE SERVYS" FOR SLOW DELIVERY. I NEVER SIGNED THEM AS MYSELF, BUT AS A SERIES OF PSEUDONYMS WHICH EVENTUALLY EVOLVED INTO "THE MYSTERIOUS PERSON WHO WRITES STUPID THINGS ON BLANK PIECES OF PAPER AND PUTS THEM IN PEOPLE'S LOCKERS", OR TMPWWSTOBPOPAPTipl FOR SHORT. (MORE ABOUT THIS SHORTLY.)

APPARENTLY I HAD DROPPED HINTS THAT IT WOULD BE NICE TO GET A NOTE BACK FROM HER. WAS THIS AN EARLY SIGN OF THE CLINGYNESS TO COME, OR SOMETHING ANYONE WOULD DO IF THEY LIKE SOMEONE AND WOULD LIKE TO INTERACT WITH THEM MORE?

...AND THEN ONE DAY, THIS HAPPENED. I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER FOR SURE IF SHE HANDED IT TO ME OR I FOUND IT IN MY LOCKER; I'M INCLINED TO THINK THE LATTER, ESPECIALLY GIVEN HOW IT IS FOLDED AND HER PREDILECTION FOR BEING DISCREET.

[**JENNY-NOTES META-NOTE:** IN GENERAL, I'LL BE CORRECTING HER SPELLING (SHE HAD SOME AMOUNT OF DYSLEXIA, WHICH WAS A SOURCE OF DEEP FRUSTRATION AND SHAME FOR HER) AND LEAVING OUT MARGINAL SCRIBBLINGS – BUT I'LL ALSO INCLUDE FULL SCANS OF THE ACTUAL PIECES OF PAPER, SO YOU CAN SEE FOR YOURSELF.]

Transcript

Top locker, row 4

To: The Mysterious Person Who Writes Stupid Things on Blank Pieces of Paper and Puts Them in People's Lockers

Oct. 15, 1980

Dear Sir/Madam,

In response to your letter in which you hinted that I should give you feedback— I am. (So there)

Firstly, I think (Yes I really do!) that you should tell your contact (he/she/it) to be careful when they are speaking on matters referring to you.

The aforesaid party could, and possibly would, give away your identity (like so much peanut-brittle). You, Sir/Madam, may be in grave danger! Because of (of course) this loose-tongued individual.

Second, I believe (Amen!) that you should watch the beforementioned person. (Man, is he weird!)

And so now as the olive oil trickles down, I leave you stranded, holding a piece of paper in your hands.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Alexandra Eliot Winsford Hall <flower logo>tm

M.O.T.C.P.S.A.O.I.G.O.W.T.T.W.

Comments

“PEANUT BRITTLE”: I’M PRETTY SURE MY MOM OFTEN PACKED THIS FOR MY LUNCHES – ONE OF THE FEW SWEET FOODS I CAN TOLERATE.

...AND THOSE ARE NOT HER ACTUAL MIDDLE NAMES, IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING.

“TMPWWSToBPoPAPtIPL” EVOLVED OUT OF SOME SCRIBBLINGS I HAD BEEN DOING THE PREVIOUS AUGUST (WHICH I HAD SPENT IN MEXICO CITY WITH MY FAMILY) INVOLVING ALIEN SPECIES WHOSE SPEECH TRANSLATED INTO ABSURDLY-LONG HYPHENATED NOUN-EXPRESSIONS. I HAD ALREADY SIGNED SOME OF MY NOTES TO JENNY WITH NAMES OF THAT SORT WHEN J MENTIONED THAT SHE AND HER BUNCH HAD INDEPENDENTLY COME UP WITH THEIR OWN SET OF SILLY ACRONYMS: JENNY WAS A MEMBER OF THE CRAZY PERSON’S SOCIETY AND OTHER INFORMAL GROUPS OF WEIRDOS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, C WAS MCUD (THE MAD-CRAZY UNICORN DRAWER), E WAS MCSFD (THE MAD-CRAZY SMILEY-FACE DRAWER), AND TIGGER WAS TMSBP (THE MAD SOCCER-BALL PUNCHER) AS WELL AS OOMOTCPSAOIGOWTTW (I CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT THE OO STANDS FOR).

WHEN JENNY TOLD ME ABOUT THIS, I FELT A SMALL JOLT OF HAPPINESS. IT WASN’T JUST “WE HAVE SOMETHING ELSE IN COMMON”, IT WAS MORE POINTEDLY “THIS MEANS I’M LIKE THEM!” -- WHICH MEANT THAT EVEN IF I COULDN’T IMAGINE MYSELF BEING A GIRL, I COULD AT LEAST IMAGINE MYSELF AS BEING PART OF THIS SMALL CROWD OF GIRLS, WHICH MADE ME FEEL A BIT LESS TERRIBLE ABOUT MYSELF.



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Writes stupid things on Blank
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in People's Lockers

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Top locker, row 4

JRH 1 1980 10 15
WEDNESDAY

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Elliot Winsford
Hall

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